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The transgressive *that*: Making the world uncanny

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Abstract
In this article, we examine how the demonstrative *that* may be used to notice an event in the world in such a way as to suggest it has highly unusual or transgressive properties and in so doing invite others to align with that implicit claim. Drawing on Freud's notion of the uncanny, we examine instances of the transgressive *that* in circumstances in which participants at least entertain the possibility that they are experiencing anomalous or paranormal objects and entities. The analysis outlines the basic features of the transgressive *that* and examines how it may be the vehicle for a range of delicate interpersonal activities. Throughout the article, we try to show the broader relevance of the analytic argument by reference to data from more mundane interactional settings and to other forms of discourse, including fiction, commentary and interview narrative.

Keywords
Anomalies, conversation analysis, demonstratives, noticing, uncanny

Introduction

That is one of a class of words in English[1] used to identify or to refer to things. Other words in this class are *this*, *these* and *those*. These words are known as demonstratives, or demonstrative determiners, and the work they do is described as demonstrative

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referencing. Although they can be used to refer to features within discourse, or mental phenomena, their basic function is exophoric or situational, in that they refer to objects or states of affairs which are extralinguistic (Buhler, 1982). Diessel (2006) reports that they are conventionally taken to be a form of grammatical marker, the broad function of which is to ground the meaning of more semantically rich words. According to Acton and Potts (2014), determiners are '[f]unction words and phrases, the nuts and bolts of language' (p. 3). Demonstratives are deictic, in that they rely on context for the turn recipient to come to see the thing to which the demonstrative refers; 'look at that' does not in itself qualify a recipient to grasp what 'that' is referring to, but requires interpretation of factors such as (but not restricted to) the current topic of conversation, the physical location of the speaker (and perhaps also the recipient) and any accompanying gestural indications, such as pointing, head direction and eye gaze.

It is widely stated in the literature that there is a strong contrastive relationship between *this* and *these* and *that* and *those*. The former are said to refer to objects close to the speaker, or proximal, and *that* and *those* refer to objects which are further away, or distal (Diessel, 1999; Levinson, 1983; Lyons, 1977; for a contemporary empirical example, see Piwek et al., 2008). The contrastive relationship, then, is said to exhibit a fundamentally spatial axis (Fillmore, 1982) in which the range of possible referents identified by *this* is comparatively limited set aside the possible range of objects referenced by the less locally and contingently focused *that*. There may be a related temporal relationship, such that 'we are going on holiday this week' will be heard as referring to the current week, whereas 'we are going on holiday that week' could refer to any week hence (Scott, 2013). Consequently, while the use of *this* may restrict the number of possible referents to the proximal, temporal or relational/personal context of its production, *that*, on the other hand, has the potential to refer to a much wider range of referents. There are, however, strong arguments that the proximal–distal framework said to underpin selection of *this* or *that* needs to be replaced by a more nuanced analysis (Scott, 2013; Strauss, 2002). Notwithstanding these arguments, it seems clear that, compared to *this*, the deictic character of *that* seems more pronounced, emphasising the interpretive work required to establish joint understanding of any actual referent so identified by its use.

Given the deictic feature of demonstratives and, thereby, their dependence on context, one of the main issues from the perspective of linguistics has been to understand how speakers and hearers can arrive at joint understanding of what a specific demonstrative might be referring to. Research in this area has a strongly cognitive orientation, in that the problem posed by the deictic properties of determiners is framed as how sufficient information can be encoded in utterances, and the conditions of their production, such that a recipient can decode the utterance and arrive at an understanding of the referent of a demonstrative that matches the referential intentions of the speaker (Potts and Schwarz, 2010). For example, Scott's (2013) analysis of the conditions under which speakers select between *this* or *that*, or between *these* or *those*, focuses on the encoding of procedural or contextual knowledge rather than conceptual meaning. This is, then, a concern with the *pragmatics* of demonstratives. This focus seems to have been strongly influenced by the tradition of work associated with speech act theory in philosophy (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), in that empirical research is routinely based on consideration of invented examples of sentences, and by reference to the role of felicity conditions which

may govern appropriate use of particular demonstratives (e.g. Acton and Potts, 2014; Gundel et al., 1988).

A notable exception is Enfield's (2003) analysis of the equivalent words to *this* and *that* in Lao (but see also Etelämäki, 2009; Strauss, 2002). He argues that because the functions of demonstratives are so intimately tied to the context of their use, it is necessary to study them in naturally occurring social interaction. Examining instances of the use of Lao demonstratives in mundane settings such as the market place and the home, Enfield makes a compelling case that notions of distal and proximal relationships found in the linguistic literature on demonstratives do not always correspond to actual instances of their use. More relevant are the contingent and fluid arenas of engagement among the speaker, addressee and referent. He argues that it is necessary to consider the location of the speaker not as 'mere space' but as an interactional space, where things like objects, relative position of bodies to other bodies and to objects, the handling of objects through extension of arms and directional movements such as eye gaze or head orientation have significance for the pragmatic component of deictic utterances such as demonstratives. This analytic framework allows him to delineate empirically how, for example, in one sequence of interaction, the Lao word for the ostensibly distal *that* was warrantably used to refer to an object located practically next to the speaker, and certainly within her immediate reach (Enfield, 2003: 94–95).

Although, as Acton and Potts (2014) phrased it, demonstratives are the functional 'nuts and bolts' of language, they are, perhaps surprisingly, also the vehicle for a range of socially oriented interpersonal activities. Numerous authors cite Lakoff's (1974) analysis as a critical contribution. According to Davis and Potts (2010), she argued that demonstratives may have an affective component, in that they can express some form of emotionality, and that these affective demonstratives can function to establish solidarity between speaker and recipient, facilitate common sentiment and may be connected to exclamativity. Since then, numerous analyses have explored the more affective dimensions of demonstratives (Acton and Potts, 2014; Davis and Potts, 2010; Liberman, 2008; Potts and Schwarz, 2010). This research, however, does not examine demonstratives in real-life interaction, but instead either uses invented examples to explore primarily cognitive matters (such as the encoding and decoding of information) or uses quantitative analysis to examine large corpora to test hypotheses about the incidence, functions and distribution of affective demonstratives. There is no fully developed interactionally grounded analysis of affective demonstratives.

There is suggestive evidence that this would be a fruitful line of inquiry to pursue. In her conversation analytic study of person reference in everyday interaction, Jackson (2013) observes how, on occasions, speakers may use indirect references such as 'man' or 'woman' to refer to people whose names they know and whose names they know are known by the recipient. She argues that by being seen to decline naming a person whose name is known to all relevant parties, speakers establish an inferential distance between the referent(s) so described and the actual participants in the interaction. They are, therefore, broadly hostile (or at very least, markedly unsympathetic) interactional acts. Jackson observes that demonstratives can be an important component of turns in which 'not-naming' is done, and play a role in sharpening the inferentially available hostile edge to these utterances (see also Sacks, 1992: vol. II: 502–503).

In this article, we extend analysis of the interpersonal and inferential work that may be accomplished through the use of *that.* We examine data from settings in which participants are confronted with events in their visual or local physical environment which may indicate the agency of non-human entities (spirits) or which may constitute an anomalous experience (seeing an unidentified flying object (UFO)). In both settings, participants respond to phenomena that are essentially ambiguous: they may be truly unusual and suggest the existence of entities and objects that are rejected by orthodox science (and common sense), or they may be events, which, though perhaps unusual, have ordinary causes. Our analysis focuses on how the use of *that* in reference to the ambiguous phenomena can inferentially constitute the referents as having non-ordinary properties or provenance while simultaneously inviting co-participants to align to that implied assessment. In short, *that* can be a resource by which the uncanny properties of the world can be made manifest and warrantable.

We use uncanny here in the sense that Freud relied on in his analysis of the psychodynamic conditions that underpin unusual or disturbing experiences (Freud, 1958 [1919]). He took it as the opposite of the German word *heimlich*, which means broadly of the home or of a place. The antonym, *unheimleich* – for which the conventional English translation is *uncanny* – therefore refers to things that are not of the home: physically, ontologically or epistemically out of place. Uncanny events, then, are those in which something is transgressive – not where (or what) it *should* be. Our analysis examines how *that* can be a significant component of turns that establish the transgressive component of the event to which they refer. Framing our analyses in terms of the uncanny allows us to establish broader properties of the transgressive *that* that illuminate interaction in settings in which more mundane matters are discussed and in discursive contexts other than verbal interaction.

Data and transcription

Data come from two sources. The first is a corpus of video and audio recordings of amateur paranormal investigations, in which individuals go at night to places reputed to be the location of ghostly or spiritual activity to record evidence that bears on the paranormal or mundane cause of events reported to occur there. There are many such groups working in the United Kingdom (and in the United States). Some groups have a strongly pro-paranormal stance and may ask mediums to assist them to contact spirits via forms of séance held on the site of alleged paranormal activity; other groups adopt a more scientific approach and use various kinds of technical equipment to aid the investigation (such as Gauss meters). People who are sceptical of the existence of spirits or ghosts are often members of more scientific paranormal investigation groups. The corpus was collected by one of the authors when she was a member of a paranormal investigation group in a large Scottish city. The corpus consists of over 100 hours of audio and video recordings of both scientifically oriented investigations and more focused attempts to contact spirits.

The second data source is the transcript from the audio track of a video posted on the social networking site *YouTube.* The video records the movements of an anomalous, illuminated object in the night sky over Vancouver, Washington, in the United States. (The video can be seen at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlEA-NvKZKs&feature=player_embedded.) The accompanying audio track captures the discussion between three people:

the person who filmed the subsequently posted video (a male) and two others (one male and one female). The participants clearly thought they were seeing something truly unusual: they decided to video the lights and then post that recording on *YouTube*; they excitedly consider and dismiss normal explanations, and at one point, one of the group calls his mother to report that they are seeing 'a UFO'.[2]

Data from both sources were transcribed using the Jefferson system conventionally used in Conversation Analysis (Jefferson, 2005). The initials of the author who collected and transcribed them identify data from each corpus: AB (paranormal investigation group data) and CD (the *YouTube* data). (Please note: corpus identifications have been anonymised.)

Minimal form transgressive *that*

The following extracts illustrate some basic forms of the transgressive *that* (hereafter, TT) turn:

(1) [AB] Dog scratching (B)

```
58      (4seconds silence)
59      (Scratching noise can be heard)
60      (E looks towards space next to D, B also looks in the same
        direction as D)
61  F:  what was that
62  B:  do you[ (         )=
63  G:        [which is unusual because there's this [theory-
64  U:                                               [mm
65  G:   [about [universal langua]ge
66  B:  =[that
67  E:          [I heard that then] the dog scratching
```

After a period of silence, the audio track records a scratching noise, and two participants orient towards a possible location in the room. At this point, F asks 'what was that'. B's turn seems responsive to F's TT turn, but it is obscured by G's turn, which seems to continue a line of discussion that predates the silence in line 58. However, it is clear that E's turn in line 67 is responsive to F's turn in line 61 and offers a description of the sound:

(2) [AB] Popping sound (A)

```
        (27seconds silence – popping noise can be heard in
        background.
        After 8seconds, C glances up towards A and then back to
        ouija board.
        After 21seconds, C looks up again. E looks towards C.
        After 25seconds, C looks over to A)
39  A:  [I'm feeling really dizzy like you did
40      [(A looks at C. B looks around towards A)
```

```
41 A:  we got that before didn't we
42      (B looks back towards board)
43 C:  °what's that°
44 A:  what
45 C:  like popping so[und
46 E:                 [(unknown) behind you
47                    [(B looks towards C. E looks at C)
48 A:  ye[h
49 C:    [yeh
50 D:    [yeh
```

In this sequence, the participants are seated around a ouija board. Over a period of 27 seconds, the audio records a strange noise; the participants engage in a range of non-verbal activities that suggest they may have heard the same odd sounds. However, the first utterance after this ostensible display of co-hearing does not address the noise, but is a report of A's inner sensation of dizziness, which had been reported earlier by another participant – given A's head gaze orientation, presumably C. C does not respond; she is focused on the ouija board and does not seem to notice A's non-verbal indication that the turn was intended for her. A then recycles the topic of dizziness, locating it as part of the recent collective history of the group. After B returns her gaze to the board, C says 'what's that'. A's response indicates that she had not heard the popping sounds. C's description of the noise is overlapped by E's turn which corroborates C's hearing and directs A's attention to a location in the room. A then aligns with the group's hearing in overlap with C's and D's confirmation of E's directions to a possible location for the source of the sound.

These instances illustrate key features of the TT turn. It is not a stand-alone single lexical item turn, but may be embedded in a minimal turn format. It is retro-sequentially responsive (Schegloff, 2007: 217–219), in that it is produced as if from second position. Like other forms of retro sequences, it invokes for the moment of its production the relevance of an at-that-point unexplicated source–consequence relationship. It displays that its speaker has registered something in the audible or physical environment, which simultaneously constitutes an account for the response. The TT utterance enjoins the co-participants' orientation, in that it invites a search for the implied first position source by the recipient(s) and any other overhearing co-interactants. It shares key features, then, with response cries (Goffman, 1978).

The production of the TT is placed in a broader trajectory of body movement and gesture: in extract 1, the first appearance and registering of the scratching noise motivated eye contact and change in head direction prior to the verbalised noticing; in extract 2, participants' bodily actions followed the verbalised TT turn. The TT is unpredisposed by the prior talk: it does not continue or develop an ongoing line of conversation; indeed, it may emerge after several seconds of silence. Although it may immediately follow a series of body movements, such as eye gaze and head turning, these are themselves bodily instantiations of retro-sequential 'first noticings' that are disjunctive to ongoing topics of talk or embodied activities. The noticing is not in the form of a statement, but wh- question format, addressed not to a specific individual, but to all within earshot. There is no attempt to describe the properties of the stimulus that motivated the

TT, nor there is an attempt to categorise the kind of thing it may be – the referent is wholly unspecified.

The minimal design, disjunctive production (in that it proposes the relevance of an earlier source event) and inclusive recipiency of the TT turn suggest urgency, and the absence of attempts to describe or classify provides for at least the possibility of unusual provenance or properties. As a consequence, and despite being unspecified, there is a sense in which the TT turn proposes that the referent may be of direct relevance to the group's business: establishing evidence of paranormal activity.

The minimal form TT turn can be expanded to index basic properties of the referent: that it is a sound (possibly even from a spirit source) or that the speaker thinks it is located in, or originated from, a particular direction relative to the group. In extract 3, two members of the group are focused on what seems to be a physical anomaly: the movement of the floor. E's 'Hear that?' (line 73) directs the participants' attention towards an unspecified audible event.[3] In extract 4, the group have been focused on trying to elicit tapping noises from a spirit source, when one member asks whether the others had heard 'that voice then' (line 68), thereby offering a basic categorical description of the proposed source/phenomenon. In both cases, then, the TT is used to propose the onset of a new form of anomalous event:

(3) [AB] Grandfather clock (B)

```
69 A:  [Do you feel like this side of the floor is buzzing(.)no
70 G:  [(           ) the floor is moving I tell you
71     [(E and C looks towards B, followed by G looking at F
72     and B, and A looking at E)
73 E:  He[ar that?
74 G:    [listen to it
75       [(G looks towards E surprised, and A looks towards E,
76     widening her eyes)
77 F:  I can 'ear that
78 G:  °Stopped°
79 E:  No it's [still there
80 C:          [still there
81 F:          [still there
```

(4) [AB] Whistle (D)

```
64 C:  if that was you tapping can you tap again please
65     (18)
66     (A looks towards B)
67     (3)
68 A:  did you hear that voice then?
69 B:  [no
70     [(B looks at A and shakes head)
```

Minimal form TT turns identify some new event in the immediate physical or sensed environment, and coordinate co-participant attention. These uses of *that*, however, are

not merely noticing something, but establishing the grounds for the thing to be noticed in a particular way: as something that might have mysterious properties. In this, they constitute an inferential landscape that occasions the relevance of particular interpretive stances.

Evidence that the minimal form TT can suggest the appearance of something deeply unusual, or in Freud's sense, uncanny, can be found in the way that it is used in various kinds of narrative. The following instance, for example, comes from Ray Bradbury's classic Gothic Americana novel, *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, and captures the moment that one of the book's main characters, a young teenage boy, first hears a sound that is later identified as the imminent arrival in town of a deeply supernatural carnival. The boy and his friend are racing to the library:

> Up steps, three, six, nine, twelve! Slap! Their palms hit the library door.
> Jim and Will grinned at each other. It was all so good, these blowing quiet October nights and the library waiting inside now with its green-shaded lamps and papyrus dust.
> Jim listened. 'What's *that*?'
> 'What, the wind?'
> 'Like music … ' Jim squinted at the horizon.
> 'Don't hear no music'.
> Jim shook his head. 'Gone. Or it wasn't even there. Come on!'
> They opened the door and stepped in.
> (Bradbury, 1998 [1962]: 12; original emphasis)

A further narrative instance is shown in the following account, which comes from Wooffitt's (1992) analysis of reports of personal paranormal experiences. In this interview fragment, the speaker (who is claiming to have mediumship powers) reports how a friend came to hear an unusual sound that hitherto only the speaker had been able to hear. (In the denouement to the narrative, it is revealed that the cause of the sound was a spirit.)

> >it's very interesting< because hh (.5) something like this happened to me hhh a few years ago (.) when I was living in edinborough (.) every time I walked into the sitting room, (.3) er:m. (.7) right by the window (.3) and the same place always I heard a lovely (.3) s:ound like ↑de↑dede ↓dededede↑dededah just a happy (.) little tu:ne (.5) a:nd >of course< I tore apart ma window I tore apart the window frame I >did Everything< to find out what the hell's causing that cos nobody else ever heard it hhh (.2) >y'know< (.) there could >be ten people in the room nobody'd hear it but me< (.7) er:m: and I wanted to know what was the: (.) material cause of this hh well: (.4) I never could figure it out and it didn't (.) upset me in fact it was quite a lovely little happy sound un:d so I just let it go (1.7) one night however a friend was with me (.) and we're just watching the tele (.3) and she was also very psychic a:nd urm (1.3) its- (.) th-the s:ound started the litt(le) musical (s) tu- s::ound started again (.3) and uhm: (.) >she said what's THAt I said oh (.) have you heard it it< ah (s) >oh ↑that's wonderful you're the first person who's ever heard it besides me< hh ((coughs)) she was frightened by it (.) got up and ran out of the room. (Wooffitt, 1992: 73)

In both cases, the TT turn reflects the properties of the instances in extracts 1 and 2: the turn is minimal, produced with a degree of urgency (indicated by italics in the literary

version and captured by exaggerated pronunciation of reported speech in the interview account) and suggests the speaker is noticing something new in the environment. They establish mystery and the expectation of a resolution. And in both cases, the referents subsequently transpire to be uncanny or supernatural entities. These examples suggest that the work of the transgressive demonstrative in verbal interaction has permeated a range of discursive and cultural contexts and practices.

Upgrading the transgressive status of the referent

The extent to which the referent constitutes an uncanny phenomenon can be amplified by various additional turn components. An instance comes from the very first exchanges recorded on the *YouTube* data. The first clearly discernible utterance on the audio track is 'what ↑is that thing?':

(5) [CD]

```
1       (Lead into clip approx. 8 seconds)
2  M?   (        )
3       (1.8)
4  M2:  what ↑is that thing?
5       (.)
6  M2:  look at it ↑Ann
7  F:   ye:h I know .hhh
```

The question is not directed to a specific recipient and receives no immediate response from any co-participant, and after a micro pause, M2 says, 'look at it ↑Ann'. This is markedly a different kind of turn: it is now an exclamatory instruction directed to one person and therefore designed more forcefully to elicit a response. F's response, though, seems mismatched to the directive work of the last turn component of M2's utterance, instead aligning with what she takes to be the inferential thrust of the first turn component, 'What ↑is that thing?': that the thing referred to is somehow mysterious, thereby establishing an equivalent epistemic status with the prior speaker.

As in the minimal form TT, upgrading the uncanny nature of the referent via the use of *thing* can also be seen in discursive contexts other than verbal interaction. The following is taken from Myers' (2001 [1903]) classic examination of unusual psychological states, such as disassociation, hypnosis and other altered states of consciousness. It comes from a section on cases where seemingly discrete personalities alternately inhabit one body. In a specific case, one new personality, identified as Sally, would act in a hostile or mischievous manner to the main or original personality (e.g. vandalising art projects undertaken by the other personality when in conscious control of the body). Myers (2001 [1903]) observes that

> Through suggestion given during hypnosis Dr Prince was finally able to synchronize the various personalities into what was to all appearances the original Miss Beauchamp – the one who existed before she underwent the various nervewracking experiences which had made her

personality split. *Sally called her 'that new thing'* and when she was present Sally was unable to make herself evident. (pp. 36–37; emphasis added)

This instance also supports Enfield's (2003) critique of the conventional position that there is a proximal–distal dimension that underpins basis for selection between *this* and *that*. Here, the personality known as Sally refers to a healed core personality with the ostensibly distal *that*, despite occupying not merely a proximal space to the referent, but *exactly the same space*: the same physical body.

Other forms of transgression upgrading are realised by addition of other lexical, phrasal or causal components and are more explicitly addressed to enhancing the strangeness of the referent identified by the TT turn component. For example, in extract 12 (discussed later), a TT is embedded between an exclamation and an assessment of the referent's extreme properties:

```
194  M2:  ↑o:h my gosh look at that i(s) nu:ts
```

Ripe vernacular language can also be used to upgrade the uncanny status of the referent. This works by emphasising the speaker's surprise at the onset of the phenomenon or, as in the case in extract 7, some new surprising development of an ongoing event:

(6) [AB] Spooksfest

```
272      [(Scraping sound)
273      [(B and F suddenly look over the right of the room. F
274      jumps)
275 F:   [what [the- .hhhh
276 B:         [what the hell was that [.hhh
277 F:                                 [sorry
```

(7) [AB] Grandfather clock

```
17  G: Are you scared (0.5)[ of us?
18                         [(A lifts her gaze off the board and
19     looks to top left of camera, G follows A's gaze)
20     (Unknown tap and then quiet moaning sound can be
21     heard. C looks towards the sound. A looks at C)
22  A: [What the fuck is that?
23  A: [(A winces whilst speaking. C and G look at A)
24  C  |Ehh-
25     [(C shakes her head whilst looking at A)
26  A  That's another clock its somewhere [else innit
27  G                                     [it sounds like a
28  G  proper clock
```

There are cases in the AB corpus in which an event is initially identified with a TT turn but which, on later reflection or investigation by the participants, is deemed to have a mundane cause. However, there are no cases in which an initial TT identification is downgraded within the same turn.

Participant orientation to normative features of transgressive *that*

When a form of 'what's that' is used in turn initial position, speakers are declining to say what they figure the *that* is at the first opportunity where that description could occur. The first response is a form of unspecific noticing, rather than an attempt to identify a candidate categorisation (e.g. 'I hear a voice') or a description of its properties (such as 'I hear moaning'). It may be that in many cases, the stimulus sound or event is essentially ambiguous, making more informative referencing problematic. But in some cases, it seems that speakers actively withhold a more informative assessment so as to ensure the minimal or upgraded TT constitutes a complete turn. If an initial TT noticing does not receive confirmation or alignment from co-participants, speakers can then subsequently offer more information. An example of this came from extract 2, where A's response to a minimal form TT leads C to characterise the sound:

(2) [AB] Popping sound (A)

```
43 C: °whats that°
44 A: what
45 C: like popping so[und
46 E:                [(unknown) behind you
47                   [(B looks towards C. E looks at C)
```

Similarly in the following extract, a TT that identifies an audible referent is met with confirmation from one of the participants, but not another. The speaker then reformulates the initial TT turn as a negative interrogative and appends 'whistle'. In extract 9, following an equivocal response, the speaker does not name the referent but attempts to enact it by taking an extended inbreath:

(8) [AB] Whistle (B)

```
25  B:  can you make a noise with your voice
26      (2)
27  B:  oooo:: ooo
28      (2.5)
29      (A and B quickly look up at each other at the same time.)
30      (3)
28  B:  did you hear that?
29  A:  yes I heard [that
30                  [(A looks off towards her left)]
31  C:  I didn't
32  B:  did you not hear that whistle?
```

(9) [AB] Lillian's breath (A)

```
46  B:  was that you?
47  A:  [wha-
```

```
48      [(A looks up towards B who is looking at A)
49  B:  like a .hhhhhhhhhhh
50  A:  nope
```

These cases, however, present weak evidence that speakers defer more explicit description in preference for a minimal form TT: without wanting to propose psychological explanations, it is possible that at the point of their first awareness of the phenomenon, and the expression of the initial TT, speakers did not have a clear sense of what it was they were hearing (or seeing) and so were unable at that precise moment to offer more information. However, other instances make a stronger case for a normative dimension in the design of TT turns. In the following extract, C is the first to speak after hearing a noise (caught on the audio track). Initially, this turn seems designed to reflect some feature of the noise, but is then abandoned and the speaker produces a TT component that focuses on recruiting other participants to the experience and offers less specific information about the referent than the turn projected by the initial turn components:

(10) [AB] Scratching (B)

```
63      (Unknown tap can be heard. B glances up as tap occurs)
64 B:  'kay (unclear)
65 C:  [it went- did you hear that
66      [(C points to the board and looks at B. A also looks at B)
67 B:  yeh I heard that
```

C's self-repair may have its origins in the prior turn. Given that C subsequently tries initially to capture some aspect of the noise, we know that, when it occurred, C heard it (and that it was loud enough to be recorded on the video). But B's ''kay', and the unclear fragment of talk that follows, is ambiguous, in that it could have been in response to the sound or something else entirely. C's initial turn design suggests that she infers that B's prior turn was indeed responsive to the sound and had done 'first noticing', thereby making relevant next speaker activities such as alignment and assessment. This is what her turn is initially designed to do. However, C's self-repair demonstrates the alternative understanding that 'first noticing' via a TT turn component was either warranted or required.

More complex TT turn forms and activities

TT can occur in more complex turn designs; and those turns can perform activities other than 'first noticing'. In these cases, the other turn components, and the actions performed by the turns, support the inferential work constituted by the TT components.

In the following two extracts, which come from the *YouTube* recording of an ostensible UFO sighting, the TT turn components are embedded within an ongoing turn. In both cases, the ongoing turns prior to the TT component are clearly designed to emphasise what the speaker perceives to be highly unusual features of the lights. These turn features thereby support the inferential work of the subsequent TT components:

(11) [CD]

```
72 M2: LOOK
73      AT IT< look how bright it is=
74 F:  =it ↑is so bright.
75      (1.5)
76 M2: its just hovering ther:e=
77 F:  =yeh (.) o::h >>oh oh oh<< (.) oh you see that (.) >you see
78      that?<=
79 M2: =↑look at the[↑li:ghts
80 F:                [>>oh oh oh<< iz dancing
```

(12) [CD]

```
190 M2:          [you wanna go chase it chris?
191 F:   =.hhh heh huh heh
192 M1:  I'll watch it here.
193      (0.8)
194 M2:  ↑o:h my gosh look at that i(s) nu:ts (.) I'm glad you
195      guys got to see it too::?
196      (0.7)
197 M1:  ↑ye:h
198 F:   its going over the house=
```

In extract 11, after agreeing with a prior observation (which itself is marked as identifying an unusual feature of the phenomenon), F's repeated and speedily produced 'oh' noticings in line 77 complement and preface a basic TT turn component, which is then repeated. In extract 12, beginning in line 194, M2 first offers an exclamatory response to the ongoing events in the sky. He then produces a directional TT component, which is then followed by an assessment of the lights that explicitly indexes their transgressive or anomalous nature, and completes the turn with a statement of his position on the collective nature of the experience that further underlines the wondrous and anomalous status of the lights.

In the next two cases, the TT component is a feature of turns in which speakers offer an assessment of their ongoing experience or features of the environment that may be evidence of anomalous events:

(13) [CD]

```
22 M2: it's gone left do you see it?=
23 F:  =ye::h.
24      (2.5)
25 F:  it ↑looks like it's just hovering like going in circles-in
26      small circles.
27      (3.2) ((sound of shuffling))
28 M2: see it's gone ↑left from the ↑right?
29      ((unspecified M clears throat))
```

```
30      (2.9)
31  M1: wa' iz i(k)=
32  F:  =yeh that's not a plane >HE he h[eh<
33  M2:                                 [n::o its like too-its colours
34      are >way too crazy<.
```

In lines 22–28, M2 and F monitor the movements of the lights in the sky. The use of 'it' to refer to the lights demonstrates that they assume these are attached to some form of object. After this phase of monitoring in line 31, M1 asks 'wa' iz i(k)' (which we take to be an attempt at 'what is it'). This turn is not dissimilar to the TT: it is a minimal form open question that proposes at least a mysterious quality to the referent. This implied mysterious quality is topicalised and made explicit in F's next latched turn. Although M1's turn offered no explicit assessment with which a next speaker could agree or disagree, F's turn initial 'yeh' establishes alignment with what she takes to be an implied assessment. She then offers a negative categorisation, discounting an obvious mundane explanation (inferentially grounded in the prior discussion of the lights' distinctive and un-plane-like movement). This negative categorisation could have been produced in the form '*it's* not a plane'; however, the use of *that* to refer to the lights/object develops the trajectory of the implied prior assessment, while strengthening its inferential force, engendering confirmation and further evidential support from M2 in the next turn.

As reported earlier, participants in haunted site investigations may use various kinds of technical equipment to measure changes in environment that may be associated with the feeling of spirit presence. In the following extract, the TT is used not to refer to a conventional kind of anomaly, such as ghost or a UFO, but to the extreme readings from a Gauss meter, an instrument that records changes in the local magnetic field:

(14) [AB] Popping sound (B)

```
221     (4)
222     (Gauss starts to increase dramatically)
223 D:  [(         )
224     [(D looks up at A)
225 A:  [that thing's going ballistic never heard it going like
226     [(A looks over at Gauss meter. C looks at A)
227 A:  that
228 C:  um: yeah
```

In the midst of a series of occurrences that could be associated with spirit agency, one of the participants notices the Gauss meter. Her reference to the Gauss meter as 'that *thing*' is not merely a recognitional reference, but one that provides for others to see the at-that-moment departure from normal functioning as relevant to other events to which the group were witness. It recruits technical equipment to the ongoing series of anomalous events, in part established through the TT.

These data indicate that turns with a TT component may be the vehicle for a range of interactional activities. These activities can be delicately designed with respect to contingent interpersonal or inferential concerns. Extract 11 contains an example:

(11) [CD]

```
72 M2: LOOK
73     AT IT< look how bright it is=
74 F:  =it ↑is so bright.
75     (1.5)
76 M2: its just hovering ther:e=
77 F:  =yeh (.) o::h >>oh oh oh<< (.) oh you see that (.) >you see
78     that?<=
79 M2: =↑look at the[↑li:ghts
80 F:                [>>oh oh oh<< iz dancing
```

There are two considerations to bear in mind before examining this extract. First, earlier in the conversation, M1 had suggested that the lights they were observing might merely be a kite. Although the other participants rejected this explanation at the time, it was, from that point forward, explicitly available as an explanatory option: 'on the table', as it were, should the participants' ongoing experiences and reflections lead them to reject more extraordinary conclusions. Second, of the three participants, F is at least as strongly inclined towards the extraordinary interpretation as any other. So, for example, she readily aligns with M2's rejection of M1's kite explanation. She explicitly raises and rejects perhaps the most obvious mundane explanation: 'yeh that's not a plane >HE he heh<'. Elsewhere in the recording (the transcript for which is not shown here), when a plane enters the area of the sky where the lights are, she says 'that's a real plane right the(h)r(h):e', thereby contrastively establishing the non-plane qualities of the lights. In addition, her utterances are often strongly exclamatory, establishing her sense of the strangeness of the lights: at various points in the recording, she says 'oh my go::d' and '>oh my god that's crazy< .hhh'. Finally, she routinely points to some aspect of the lights that seem to differentiate them from lights associated with known and mundane objects or events: for example, she says 'o:h wo:w iz blinking' and 'look iz falling >↑iz ↑falling<'. On the basis of her contributions to the discussion, it is reasonable to conclude that she was at least sympathetic to the possibility that the lights represented a truly extraordinary aerial object that originated somewhere other than the earth.

In the light of this, the sequence in extract 14 has some interesting analytic features. M2's turn in lines 72–73 focuses on the brightness of the lights. F's self-selected response affirms M2's assessment; indeed, the pronunciation and emphasis in 'it ↑is so bright' upgrade the prior assessment. M2 then reports the lack of motion of the lights.

Bright lights and hovering are not unusual features of terrestrial aircraft: all aircraft are fitted with powerful lights, and helicopters hover (as can some military aeroplanes). Up to this point in this sequence, then, the participants have described and commented on features of the lights that do not by themselves present compelling evidence for a non-normal explanation. However, in her next turn, in lines 77–78, after a latched agreement with the prior turn, there is first an elongated 'oh', then a very rapid series of 'ohs', a request for visual confirmation that is 'oh'-prefaced and formulated around a TT, and then a truncated version of the TT visual confirmation request. The exclamatory production of the change of state of knowledge tokens (Heritage, 1984), and the repeated TT, implicitly reassert the possibility of a non-normal explanation. Although at that

point she has not explicitly indicated what had changed in the light's position or movements that motivated her response, her turn nonetheless proposes a specific ontological interpretative framework. This has interactional consequences, in that the next speaker's utterance will be interpreted in the light of the implied position F has established.

M2's next turn reinstates the topic of the lights. One explanation is that he heard F's prior turn to be simply another noticing of the lights and that his turn is alignment or agreement. This seems unlikely; however, he does not confirm he can see what F clearly can, and there is no acknowledgement of any new development in the appearance or behaviour of the lights. His turn is thereby disjunctive to the trajectory opened up by F's prior turn: he ignores the explicit request for visual confirmation and reverts to a feature that is more amenable to a mundane explanation, thereby declining the opportunity to endorse or even consider the possible extraordinary character of the lights implied in the prior turn. Moreover, his utterance does not even remark on any specific qualities of the lights.

This turn, though, is overlapped by F, just at the point at which she can see that it is broadly disjunctive to her prior turn and can anticipate from 'look at the' that M2 is about to reassert the topic of the lights. This may be a case of what Jefferson (1986: 159) termed interjacent overlap, a method by which a speaker can initiate a turn, the relevance of which is in some way threatened by the current turn. F repeats the three-part 'oh' sequence to overlap with the production of the word 'lights', at least partially obscuring it, and continues into clear space beyond the completion of 'lights' when it is apparent that M2 is not continuing the turn. It is at this point that she reports the new feature of the lights' behaviour that presumably motivated her prior turn: she says, 'iz dancing'. This clearly reasserts her previously implied ontological assessment, in that terrestrial aircraft are unlikely to be able to move in such a way that their lights can be characterised as dancing.

Given her response to M2's disjunctive turn, it is highly likely that F's use of the TT in her prior turn was a resource by which delicately to occasion the relevance of a particular interpretative framework for what was clearly an ambiguous phenomenon.

Discussion

In this article, we have argued the demonstrative *that* is a constituent feature of activities that propose that the referent, although ambiguous, may have transgressive properties – in Freudian terms, that it is uncanny or out of place in the natural order. These activities are varied and include noticings of novelty, exclamations of surprise and exhortations to others to attend to and confirm the speaker's perceptions. As a component of these activities, *that* has both ontological and epistemic properties, in that it is a vehicle by which a particular interpretative landscape can be established such that the referent is implicitly categorised as a transgressive object or event, and in that it initiates a potential sequential trajectory that implicitly predisposes co-participants to subscribe to that categorisation. Through the TT, it is claimed that something is uncanny, and others are invited to acquiesce with, assent to or, at the very least, confront that claim.

Diessel (2006) notes the convention that there are two classes of words: content words, such as nouns, verbs and adjectives, and grammatical markers, such as prepositions, auxiliaries and determiners. He argues that demonstratives are not merely another

type of grammatical marker, but constitute a distinct, third class of word type because they have specific communicative functions in coordinating co-participants' joint attention, which he claims is fundamental to language acquisition and the development of grammar. Our analysis supports Diessel's remarks on the coordinating function of *that*, but suggests a deeper, constitutive function, in which the TT is a way not only to recruit co-participants' attention to an event or object in the local environment, but is also a resource by which co-participant attention may be inferentially circumscribed and shaped.

It might be argued that the data we have used in this analysis colour our analytic claims to the extent that they have no wider applicability – that somehow, taking part in a paranormal site investigation or joining a group focused on contacting spirits implies that participants will have such strong expectations that something extraordinary might happen that they are wholly predisposed to interpret events as having spiritual or supernatural qualities. But it is not obvious that this concern is valid: some of the participants may have been entirely sceptical of the paranormal; besides, the phenomena are ambiguous at the point they are first observed – their status as ordinary or extraordinary events still has to be decided. Indeed, one of the key functions of the TT is to imply the extraordinary character of the referent at the precise moment it is first noticed in talk. Moreover, we have not relied entirely on data from the site investigation corpus, and there is no reason to believe that the participants in the *YouTube* data recorded their video because of prior beliefs: they were simply in the right place, at the right time, with the right equipment. However, it remains the case that if this analysis holds true, we should expect to find evidence of the TT in contexts other than those in which transparently transgressive phenomena such as paranormal or spiritual agencies are a central concern for the participants.

In her exploration of the 'choreography of the verbal, facial and gestural enactment of disgust', Wiggins (2013: 506) examines recordings of family meal times and identifies the interactional processes associated with expressions of revulsion at, or dislike of, certain foods. She presents the following extract:

```
1 Laura:   was it all there still (.) [on the email
2 Beth:                               [I can smell the< ↑pea:nut [butt:er>
3 Roger:                                                         [mm-hm
4          (1.2)
5 Beth     have ↑you put that on the ↑onio:n bread
6 Laura:   ↑mm
7          (0.6)
8 Beth:    ↑eur:::↓gh
(From Wiggins, 2013: 496)
```

It appears that Beth may not like peanut butter – her turn in line 2 can certainly be interpreted as indicating a dislike of its aroma – but she is unequivocal in her opinion that it has no place on onion bread: it transgresses her view of what foods can be combined. In her turn in line 5, she uses *that* to refer to the peanut butter, a turn which is then followed by her equally unequivocal expression of disgust in line 8.

The next instance from Wiggins' corpus suggests that young children are equally adept at using the TT. In this sequence from a family dinner, five-year old Isla uses a minimal form TT to refer to a drink, which, it transpires, she does not like:[4]

```
1 Mum:  eh: (0.2) [cutlery?
2 Isla:           [what's- (0.4) tha:t
3                 [(Isla looking down into cup)
4       (1.0) (looks up at Mum)
5 Mum:  what's what.
6 Isla: that (looks down into cup, Mum peers in too)
7       (0.8)
8 Mum:  's o↑range juice=
9 Isla: yuck:y: (leaning back in chair, looking away)
```

Finally, the following comes from an article from the UK restaurant critic and broadcaster, Jay Raynor, which was published in the monthly food supplement of the UK Sunday newspaper *The Observer*. The thrust of this light-hearted article is that we should not be ashamed to like basic or unsophisticated foods. He begins by invoking a morally deviant identity:

> Being a pervert carries with it risks, the most acute of which is exposure. Deviating from the norm is fine, unless everyone finds out. The only way to face this challenge is to be open … That is what I intend to do right here and right now. I found the strength to do so after … some mocking from my eldest son. He looked at what I was having for breakfast one day, shook his head and said: 'If only people knew … ' For a moment I was afraid. What if people did find out? … Which was when I concluded that I had to be myself, that if I was honest and open, nobody could hold anything over me.

> So here it is: I adore burnt toast. I don't mean slightly darker than the way you like your toast. I mean black. Best of all is still hot black toast with a smear of butter (the cheap spreadable kind) that fizzes into the holes on contact and then a bit of Marmite to dance with the acrid carbon notes … It makes me happy. (Raynor, *The Observer Food Supplement*, April 13th, 2013; original emphasis)

He then writes, 'You don't think *that's* especially transgressive, do you? OK. How about this … ' (emphasis added) and goes on to confess to a range of other tastes and culinary practices not normally associated with the sophisticated palate of the professional food writer and restaurant reviewer. What struck us, of course, is that this line embodies many of the themes we have developed in this analysis: he uses *that* to refer to something out of place, or transgressive, and he even explicitly uses the word 'transgressive' to refer to the eating habits he is disclosing.[5]

These examples, and the others from fictional literature and verbal narratives, make us reasonably confident that the TT is a distinct form of demonstrative and that our empirical claims are not relevant only to paranormal site investigations but hold for other circumstances in which people may have occasion to notice and constitute events in the world as being out of place, in violation of norms and expectations, or uncanny.

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Notes

1. To focus our argument, we refer only to use of 'that' in British and American English. Although it is clear that there are equivalent words in most, if not all, other languages, we are in no position to say whether this analysis holds for the use of demonstratives in languages other than English.
2. The lights were subsequently revealed to be a large speciality kite, equipped with extensive light emitting diode (LED) lights (Branton and McVicker, 2011). However, the group was not alone in concluding the object was something stranger than it turned out to be: many people posted comments on the *YouTube* website, and some agreed with the group's interpretation that the lights represented unidentified flying object (UFO) activity or some other kind of paranormal phenomenon (Woods and Wooffitt, 2014).
3. In this sequence, E and G provide two alternative references to the noise, which underline the distinctive epistemic work of the transgressive *that* (TT) formulation. In overlap with E's TT in line 73, G says, 'listen to it'. From the transcript, it is apparent that this turn is – just – in second position to E's initial noticing; but in the real time of talk, it is possible that co-participants could hear it as a candidate first noticing: one which refers to the unusual noise with 'it', rather than 'that'. It is noticeable that in F's subsequent contribution, in which she corroborates the prior noticing of the sound, she says 'I can 'ear *that*', as opposed to 'I can 'ear it'. Her turn recycles turn components of G's turn that establish the hearably uncanny qualities of the referent and does so in the clear of surrounding talk. This provides (admittedly speculative) evidence that participants recognise that, in this sequential context, there is an epistemic asymmetry between the TT and other alternative referents.
4. We are grateful to Sally Wiggins for permission to use these extracts from her corpus.
5. Just for the record, though, we had coined the term TT at least a year before this article was submitted.

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